

The Fresh Express way..... sustainably !

Sustainability is the foundation on which Fresh Express was built not because it is the catch word of current times but because there was no other way to pursue agriculture in a drought prone area in Western Maharashtra, India. This was where the family lands are located and the decision was taken by the then, family patriarch to do what it takes to not only revive the family's ancestral lands and plant vineyards, but also motivate the entire neighbouring community to work towards bringing about a green revolution, instead of abandoning their lands and agriculture as a profession and move to cities in hopes of better opportunities. This is reflected in our mission statement - "We strive to serve "Quality without Compromise" through Innovation, Trust and Transparency to all our esteemed customers and growing as "Partners in Progress" all through the Value Chain, right from Field Level to our end Customers." Fresh Express, today is a fully farmer owned organization of 500+ farmers pursuing Natural Farming with an objective to make agriculture commercially viable and sustainable.

Sustainability Goals of Fresh Express -

1. Reduce Waste and Water Consumption by 2% every year
2. Replace fossil fuels with Solar (wherever possible) in all Fresh Express Farms
3. Progressive reduction of Chemical inputs with biological and plant inputs in farming
4. Year on year improvement in Women to Men Farmers ratio in Fresh Express pool of farmers
5. Active adoption of Ag Tech to accelerate efficiency, transparency and traceability

Some of the ways in which we have been able to achieve our goals are -

- After years of research, development and testing on our own family-owned farms, locally produced pesticides & fertilizers made from organic inputs, validated by scientifically backed compositions, have been extremely effective against a variety of pests. Most importantly, we have been successful in reducing and replacing chemical sprays by 33%, leading to better tasting fruit and increased shelf life.
- Fresh Express has successfully trained and provided basic infrastructure for farmers to produce these compositions on their own farms, using biological and plant inputs grown on their own farms. Additionally, we have encouraged the use of 'farmer-friendly' fungi and bacteria that can be brewed from a small amount of culture for mass production and sprayed in poor weather conditions, to prevent diseases such as downey and powdery mildew. The rains during critical growing stages in Nov/Dec led to significant reduction in yield and higher than average number of sprays in general on farms across grape growing regions of Sangli and Nashik. Crucially well-timed, biological sprays during these conditions have been effective in saving several acres of loss. There has been a marked difference in the yield, quality and MRLs of fruit from farms that have employed this technology to its optimum.
- Use of these Natural farming technologies have helped farmers reduce their inputs costs by upto 40%!
- Fresh Express' own family-owned farms boast an usage of over 92% biologically produced inputs during the current growing season and we are striving towards pushing this percentage even higher!
- Fresh Express' internal technology team has developed "farmer-relevant" weather and irrigation monitoring system at one-fifth the cost of systems that are generally available on the market today for farmers. This technology has been instrumental in allowing our farmers to take preventive and corrective actions based on the exact micro-climate of his/her plot, allowing for more effective action against diseases borne from poor weather conditions.
- During extended periods of poor weather, early detection of any onset of disease is key in being able to control spread to other areas in the farm. Fresh Express' drone and satellite imaging system allowed precise detection of plants showing early signs of disease to be individually treated in a timely manner, avoiding further spread and need for excess use of chemical sprays.
- Rural areas are subjected to extended hours of power outage, so as part of our sustainable goals, gradual shift to solar powered lights power up farm homes in the evening making it possible to run water motors to ease the lives of farm workers with their domestic chores.
- " A country is only as advanced as it's women are" and we pride ourselves in being women empowered as more than 95% of our workforce are rural women, who have striven to be financially independent. Special awards, recognitions, training and financial incentives are announced for women farmers to encourage them to come to the forefront. Most importantly we encourage the men folk to support ownership of land by the women in the family, by giving a higher rate to fruit harvested on women owned lands.

Sustainability is the not only the key to a better future, currently, it is the only way to having a future at all !! We, at Fresh Express, consciously weave it into our everyday actions, investing our resources, time and skill into creating a friendlier and greener world for all !